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SUBJECT: TURKISH PM ERDOGAN'S OCTOBER 15 VISIT TO BAGHDAD

REF: ANKARA 1477

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Gary A. Grappo for reason 1  
.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Turkish PM Erdogan arrived in Baghdad on October 15 for a one-day visit to meet with Iraqi President Talabani and Iraqi VPs al-Hashemi and Abdul-Mahdi, as well as to conduct bilateral and expanded talks with Iraqi PM al-Maliki as part of meetings of the Iraqi-Turkish Strategic Cooperation Council. PM Erdogan and the Turkish delegation signed 48 memoranda of understanding aimed at bolstering economic integration between the neighboring countries. The visit's agenda also included discussions about political issues such as combating terrorism and Turkey's role in ongoing disputes between Iraq and Syria. Iraqi contacts noted that the visit was viewed by both the GOT and the GOI as a positive step towards greater cooperation, although they stressed that follow-up implementation could be critical in determining how successful the visit had been. End summary.

DEEPENING COOPERATION ON ENERGY, TRADE, AND SECURITY  
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12. (C) On October 15, PM Erdogan and a delegation of nine ministers visited Baghdad, signing protocols and memorandums of understanding in the areas of trade, water sharing, transportation, oil fields, and other joint economic projects. The signings follow the September 16-17 meeting of the Turkey-Iraq Strategic Cooperation Council in Istanbul, during which Iraqi and Turkish delegations negotiated and prepared the accords to be signed. Agreements in the area of energy highlighted plans to transport Iraqi natural gas to Europe via Turkey, as well as the extension of an agreement regarding an Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline and an accord to strengthen the capacity of new and existing cross-border power lines. The agreements also heralded the establishment of two new border gates to further trade between the nations.

13. (C) In the wake of the Turkish Parliament's decision to extend cross-border operations in northern Iraq against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) for one year, PM Erdogan met separately with Iraqi VPs al-Hashemi and Abdul-Mahdi to discuss GOT efforts to further dialogue with the Kurdish administration, such as the GOT's plan to establish a consulate in Erbil. The Associated Press reports that Iraqi PM al-Maliki expressed concern about a possible infringement on Iraqi sovereignty implied by the Turkish Parliament's decision during a meeting with his Turkish counterpart. At the close of the visit, Erdogan responded that Turkey respects Iraqi sovereignty, but he stressed that the Kurdish rebels are a security threat to Turkey, and that the GOT will continue to combat them.

14. (C) In an October 17 meeting with the A/DCM, Turkish CG Bostali said that another agreement signed by the GOI and the GOT during the visit included provisions to significantly increase Turkey's training of Iraqi police, expand intelligence cooperation, and enhance border control efforts, thereby facilitating cooperative initiatives between the

neighboring countries in the areas of security and counterterrorism.

15. (C) Iraqi contacts emphasized the spirit of cooperation in joint economic initiatives between the GOI and the GOT, emphasizing positive gains in the areas of security, trade, agriculture, health, and industry. Despite mostly positive coverage, local press reports widely quoted PM al-Maliki's comment to PM Erdogan that "no one can violate" Iraqi sovereignty. These reports also noted that al-Maliki did not explicitly mention Turkish military incursions in northern Iraq or possible Syrian involvement in the August 19 bombings in Baghdad during the visit.

#### MFA REACTIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD WITH IMPLEMENTATION

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16. (C) Turkish CG Bostali also stated that PM Erdogan wants two items to facilitate implementation of the agreements signed during the visit. These items include a point-by-point framework protocol that captures all areas of cooperation encompassed by the agreements and a detailed calendar for implementation of the agreements. Bostali predicted that visits to Iraq by technical implementation delegations would "accelerate promptly".

17. (C) MFA contacts also termed the visit positive, although their body language communicated a limited degree of skepticism about the level of follow-up expected from the GOT. Taha Abassi, head of the MFA's Neighboring Countries Department, described the visit as positive overall, but "with some ups and downs". He said the visit was

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particularly important because it required the GOT to be "serious" about the water situation. FM Zebari's Special Assistant, Qusay Alkoubaisi, also called it a good visit, but noted that against the backdrop of the visit, the Turks were working behind the scenes-- both in the region and in New York-- to try to stop the appointment of a senior UN official to investigate the August 19 bombings and external interference in Iraq's affairs. He did not elaborate on whether this issue was specifically raised in meetings between the two sides. Deputy FM Labeed Abbawi told A/DCM separately the Turks were working to prevent the appointment.

On the eve of the meeting, FM Zebari told visiting members of the Joint Campaign Plan Assessment Team that the GOI had essentially given up on the Turkish government's mediation of the conflict with Syria. Zebari implied that the Turks were favoring the Syrians in the mediation efforts. "We are treated like the second favorite son, but the Syrians are treated like the first-born son," he noted wryly. He said that he had made clear to the Turks that the GOI would continue to insist on the appointment of the UN official, while recognizing that the Turks preferred to handle the issue strictly through their mediation effort.

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